

CIVIL Annual Report

January 1999 - September 2000

I. Introduction

Organizations and their employees world-wide are increasingly aware of incidents of workplace violence and both the danger and fear of danger that exist. NIH has an active program in place, not only to help address actual incidents in a coordinated and effective way, but also to identify and handle potentially disruptive situations before they become violent. This first annual report to the Deputy Director, NIH, provides an historical summary of how CIVIL came to be, how it has evolved, and what it has accomplished in its first year and nine months of existence (January 1999 through September 2000).

II. Background

In 1996, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services issued a policy statement affirming that the Department supports and actively works to assure a violence- and threat-free work environment. In response, the Deputy Director, NIH, created the Prevention Initiative Against Hostility and Violence (PIAHV) whose purpose was to evaluate the need and make recommendations for policies and strategies for preventing and reducing violence at the NIH. Staff was notified of this initiative by memorandum dated July 1998.

PIAHV members conducted a thorough research of the extent of the need to address workplace violence at NIH, the best practices cited in the literature and used by similarly situated organizations, and experiences of other federal agencies. From their work, they developed many objectives for NIH in education, training, and response capabilities. They recommended to the Deputy Director that a permanent, funded committee be established to address violence and violence prevention on an on-going basis. They recommended this continuing group be called CIVIL, which was originally an acronym but now stands for "civil behavior in the workplace" and the number (C-I-V-I-L or 24845) which people can call from NIH facilities for assistance on a wide variety of violence-related concerns. A presentation was made to Executive Officers in December 1998, and with their approval, CIVIL was created in January 1999.

III. Fiscal Year 1999 accomplishments

CIVIL held its first annual planning retreat on June 18, 1999, where we established our vision, *An NIH Work Environment Free of Acts and Threats of Violence*, and developed a strategic plan for realizing that vision. Five key areas were identified: (1) policy and structure; (2) a methodology for dealing with a crisis; (3) formation and development of a response team; (4) dealing with the aftermath of a crisis; and (5) prevention efforts. We established four subcommittees with responsibility for these areas, which were: Policy; Aftermath; Education; and Prevention. In addition, although not established as a subcommittee, the Response Team was officially formed as a component of CIVIL.

The Policy Subcommittee, with leadership from the Chair, arranged for the appointment of individuals representing various entities from the NIH community, obtained authorization for a separate budget and position for CIVIL, and finalized CIVIL's Charter, all of which were approved in principle by the Deputy Director in the summer of 1999. The Aftermath subcommittee identified systems that already existed within NIH to provide for counseling services in a crisis situation. The Prevention subcommittee identified and prioritized the issues to be presented to the NIH community in prevention efforts and identified the appropriate audiences and methodology for the initial approach to communications. The fourth subcommittee, Education, focused its attention on identifying a marketing strategy and educating the NIH community regarding the purpose and accessibility of CIVIL, as well as setting FY 2000 goals for distributing articles in various NIH publications.

A presentation was made to Executive Officers on September 28, 1999 to update them on the progress that had been made since CIVIL's formation in January of that year.

The Response Team members, through consultations with similar organizations elsewhere, resources in the literature, and real life experiences at NIH, refined the techniques it used to respond to situations brought to the attention of CIVIL. The team, which consisted primarily of the Coordinator and representatives from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the Ombudsman, and the NIH police, enhanced their internal working relationships through informal debriefings and discussions of lessons learned. This evaluation process is on-going.

IV. Fiscal year 2000 accomplishments

Structural changes

The second annual planning retreat was held May 15, 2000, with a major objective to review and refine the function of CIVIL. We discussed the fact that CIVIL has two primary roles: policy development and provision of expert advice and guidance to staff regarding potential or actual incidents. In an effort to better communicate these two roles, we renamed the CIVIL Committee the CIVIL Advisory Committee, emphasizing its responsibility in analyzing NIH's violence prevention needs and proposing recommendations for policy and procedural changes to address those needs. We retained the name "Response Team" to describe the subcomponent of CIVIL which pulls together experts in handling specific issues and incidents that, if not addressed, could possibly lead to violence. We changed the name of those who take initial calls and who convene the Response Team, if needed, to Response Coordinators, dropping the word "Critical" so that NIH staff requesting assistance do not have to decide whether or not their concern is "critical."

Given the size of the NIH community and the need to provide continuity of experience on the CIVIL Advisory Committee, the group was expanded to include: an additional Executive Officer (for a total of three, each term ending in a different year); a member of the EEO community in addition to representation from the Diversity Council; a Union representative; and additional program staff from both the intramural and extramural programs. All will serve three

year terms and the terms of the Executive Officers will be staggered so there will always be two EO's with previous CIVIL experience on the Advisory Committee.

A third change to the structure of CIVIL was the merging of the Prevention and Education subcommittees into one, with the title retained to show its full purpose. There are currently three subcommittees: Policy, Prevention/Education, and Aftermath. As our work continues, we expect the largest responsibility will fall to the Prevention/Education group, and its size will expand as necessary to meet the needs.

Policy Subcommittee Accomplishments:

We have made it part of our policy that whenever an employee contacts CIVIL and requests assistance of the Response Team (as opposed to individual advice and referrals), the Response Coordinator will notify the Executive Officer of the involved IC(s). This will be done not only to alert the EO and draw upon his/her knowledge of the situation but also to help assure that proper resources within the IC are used and that the burden of responsibility does not fall solely upon the manager or the Human Resources Office .

Our website has been updated and now is accessed more directly, rather than through several organizational layers as the prototype had been. The URL is now advertised and published on our marketing instruments. It is <http://civil.nih.gov>.

Prevention/Education Subcommittee Accomplishments

Publications - As part of the effort to reach different audiences and inform them of the existence and role of CIVIL, as well as how to contact it, we wrote articles for several NIH publications. The January and February issuances were brief statements about CIVIL; the June and August articles described CIVIL in more detail. The publications and dates in which our information was produced are as follows:

- January/February 2000 The NIH Catalyst
- February 8, 2000 NIH Record
- February 2000 R&W Newsletter
- June 13, 2000 NIH Record with website
- August 2000 R&W Newsletter with website

Presentations - The purpose of the presentations were to inform different segments of the NIH community of the existence of CIVIL and its role, as related to them, of helping prevent and respond to workplace violence. In addition, we have given presentations to external organizations to advise them of the efforts NIH has made and to share lessons learned.

- January 25, 2000 - EEO community
- NICHD - February, 2000 (managers)

- CIT - January 11 and April 26, 2000 (managers and HR staff)
- ORS - September 21, 2000 (staff)
- Personnel Officers Group - September 14, 2000 (update)
- External organizations:
 - ✧ Violence Prevention Practitioners' Roundtable - February 2000
 - ✧ Israeli social work program - April 25, 2000
 - ✧ Department of Agriculture - July 26, 2000

V. Staffing and Budget

CIVIL has one full-time, dedicated FTE, approved by the Deputy Director of NIH. That position serves both as the primary Response Coordinator and as the principal staff support for the CIVIL Advisory Committee. In addition, the Office of Human Resource Management of the Office of the Director has supplied other personnel resources through the deployment of two OHRM staff members as back-up Response Coordinators, as needed. One of these back-up coordinators has CIVIL duties assigned on an on-going basis, thus that person attends CIVIL Advisory Committee meetings, participates in one or more of the subcommittees, and assists in administrative functions as well as response responsibilities in order to have a minimum of two fully-versed people qualified to handle calls to CIVIL .

The CIVIL Advisory Committee has grown over the course of CIVIL's existence to include 17 individuals, and its current and former members are noted in Appendix B. The Advisory Committee, in addition to having held two day-long retreats over the past 18 months, meets regularly on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Each hour-long meeting consists of the review of the progress of the subcommittees and approval of their work, as needed, a summation of calls made to CIVIL, and, as appropriate, special presentations from both members of the NIH community and external experts, such as violence-prevention experts Gene Ragula from the FBI and John Campbell from the Department of Agriculture.

The work of CIVIL has been funded through the Central Services Committee with a budget of \$140,100 for FY 2000, in addition to the supplemental support provided by OHRM and the many hours of work by the members of the Advisory Committee and subcommittees. The designated budget included: the salary and benefits of the Response Coordinator; cost of the CIVIL phone line; computer support from CIT for the development of the logo and establishment and maintenance of the website; training for one or more CIVIL members; and procurement of marketing and educational tools, including a banner, pens, bookmarks, and other hand-outs, as well as the printing of CIVIL Conversations and leaflets. Further, OHRM support included the provision of office space and equipment and clerical and administrative help.

VI. Cases and calls

Although CIVIL did not begin fully advertising its services to the entire NIH community until January 2000, we had been receiving calls from Executive Officers, Personnel Officers, and

managers since January 1999. Over the 21 months covered in this report, CIVIL has received calls from eighteen of the ICs. There have been a total of 52 calls, most of which did not require a convening of the Response Team.

Seven of the matters concerned personal relationships between couples, including domestic violence, stalking, and unwanted attention at the workplace. Three involved colleagues or managers worried about possible suicidal tendencies of employees. Seven were threats, either direct, veiled or perceived. Several were employees or management officials calling to talk about an issue or incident and seeking advice on whether it was cause for worry and whether or not they should take further action. The majority of the calls were made because managers, and occasionally an employee, noted a significant change in behavior or performance of a staff member or what they called “odd” or “bizarre” behavior that they found frightening.

Response Teams were convened on 17 occasions. The teams consisted of two to five members, the most frequent combination being the Response Coordinator and representatives from EAP and the Ombuds Office. There were several occasions when the NIH Police were also present and one situation where a member of the General Counsel’s office attended. Most of these advisory meetings resulted in one of the following:

- a meeting of staff members in conflict facilitated by the Response Coordinator or a member of the Ombuds Office;
- written clarification to employees of what was expected and how to contact EAP;
- alternatives to discipline which included changes in behavior coupled with resources to help enable those changes through EAP, training, or other assistance;
- disciplinary action taken with a safety net clearly put in place for the employee and others in the office affected.
- training, information, or consultation from Response Team members from the Division of Safety, the EAP, or the Ombudsman’s Office with office colleagues of affected staff member.

Feedback from those served by CIVIL has indicated that they particularly appreciate two things: (1) the knowledge that they are not alone in handling violent, or potentially violent, incidents but that the expert resources of NIH are working in cooperation with them and in support of them; and, (2) the follow-up services provided. Follow-up calls are made as a continuation of the support to those in the midst of a difficult situation and to determine whether the action plan was appropriate or needs to be adjusted

VII. Fiscal Year 2001 Goals

During the coming fiscal year, the CIVIL Advisory Committee will focus on the following goals:

- **issuance of an Administrative Manual Chapter establishing NIH policy and procedures regarding violence in the work place;**

- **increased coordination, including reporting and information sharing to the extent possible and appropriate, with Response Team components (the NIH Police, EAP, and Ombuds), as well as with the Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) members;**
- **publication of Operating Guidelines for Response Team members;**
- **development of a computerized data tracking system;**
- **coordination with others on security study of NIH;**
- **prioritization of experts/consultants to call if needed in emergency;**
- **accessibility of EAP and Work and Family Life Center for a period of time by employees who are involuntarily separated from the Federal Service;**
- **development of standard language for inclusion in termination proposals and decision letters;**
- **procurement of TTY accessibility for NIH's hearing-impaired community; and,**
- **dissemination of CIVIL information to NIH community through:**
 - ❄ **enhancements to web page**
 - ❄ **representation at NIH fairs and cafeterias at NIH sites**
 - ❄ **distribution of CIVIL Conversations and leaflets**
 - ❄ **poster displays in NIH buildings**
 - ❄ **articles in NIH publications**
 - ❄ **presentations to staff**
 - ❄ **sponsorship of speakers/seminars/conferences**
 - ❄ **reissuance of NIH violence policy**

Summary

NIH has made significant progress in the initial 21 months of CIVIL's existence. We now have in place a structure to respond to threats and acts of violence in the workplace and are well on the way to begin implementation of an education/prevention program. Through continued support from the Office of the Deputy Director, NIH, we are optimistic that we will be able to assist the NIH in assuring a safe and secure working environment for all of its employees.